

Poletown Historic District
Bohn Aluminum and Brass Corporation
2512 E. Grand Boulevard
Detroit
Wayne
MI

HABS No. MI-275-3

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON DC, 20240

STATE Michigan	COUNTY Wayne	TOWN OR VICINITY Detroit
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Poletown Historic District Bohn Aluminum and Brass Corporation (City Directory)		HABS NO. MI-275-3
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE National Can Company, General Aluminum and Brass Casting Works, Helms Corporation		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 2512 East Grand Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) 1902 (City Directory)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) Unknown	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) The Bohn Aluminum and Brass Corporation complex is historically significant for its role in Detroit's early labor movement. This industrial complex was once the site of several vehement labor protests. These are reputed to have been the first instances where black workers overcame their traditional caution concerning labor unions. (Cont'd on Page 2)		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) The central office building is Neo-Classic. The remainder is industrial.		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Primarily steel frame and masonry bearing wall construction.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Refer to attached plans on Page 4.		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE No exterior features are distinctive.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) No interior features are distinctive.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES Several alterations and additions were made in the complex since its inception in 1902. (Specific alterations and additions with their respective dates are undetermined.)		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE The complex is presently vacant. It is scheduled for demolition in 1981.		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDE LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) (SEE ATTACHED SHEET)		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Theron Francis, William Kessler and Associates, Inc.		DATE July 20, 1981

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

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Aluminum and Brass Corporation)

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SIGNIFICANCE (Cont'd)

The overwhelmingly black labor force at Bohn Aluminum and Brass Corporation was notably successful in these early disputes. The Bohn Aluminum union local was the first UAW union to elect a black president.

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HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE: Bohn Aluminum and Brass Corporation

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

I. Document

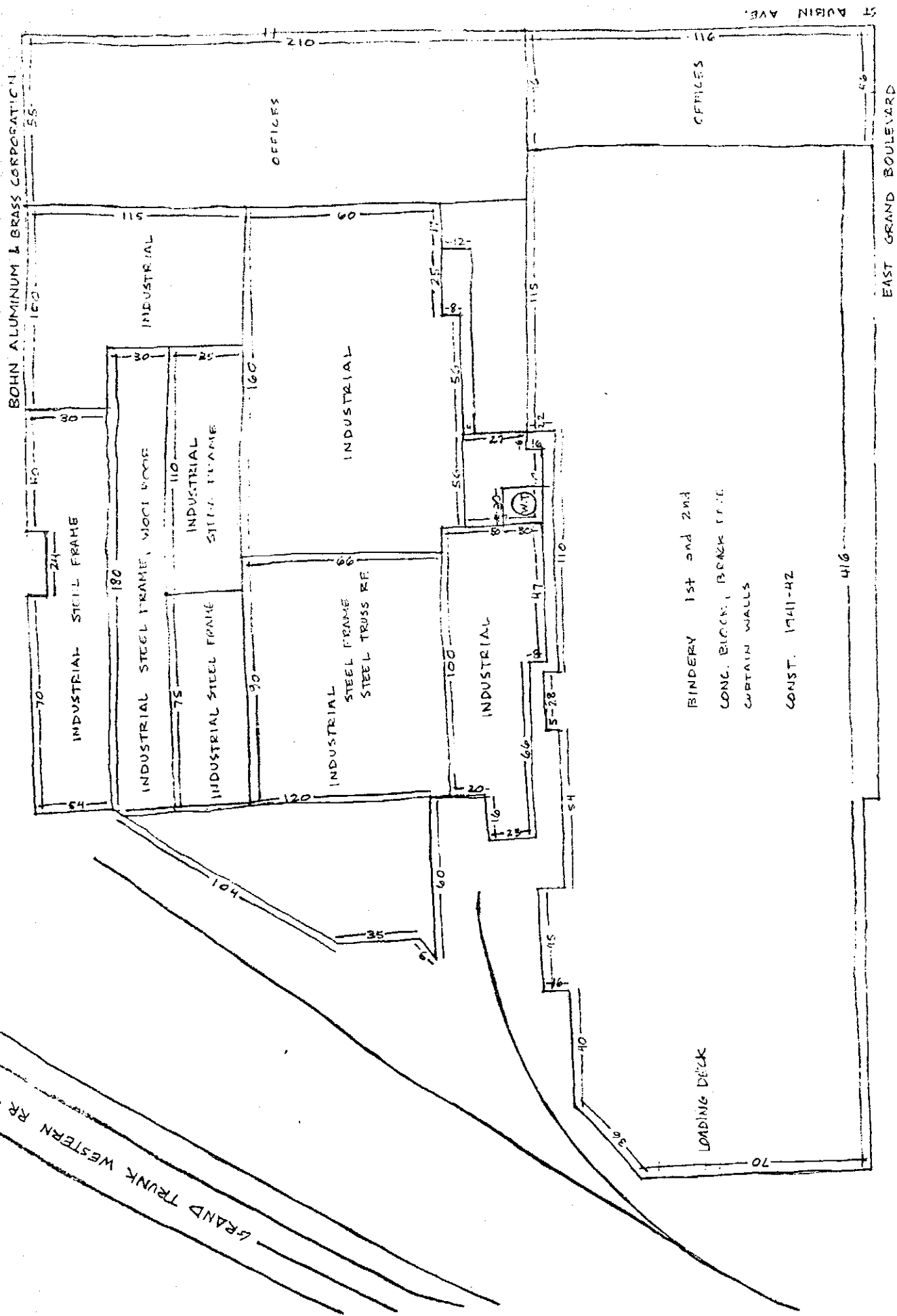
1. Environmental Impact Statement Central Industrial Park, City of
Detroit Community and Economic Development Department. Detroit: 1980.

II. Reference Material

1. City Directory, R. L. Polk and Company, Publisher. Detroit: (Vols. 1895-1971)

III. Interview

1. Ron Alpern, Labor History Society



1. Property Name

Bohn Aluminum

2. Location

Street Address: East Grand Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan

The Bohn Aluminum industrial complex is located on the northwest corner at the intersection of E. Grand Boulevard and St. Aubin Avenue. It is situated in Detroit's Central Industrial Park.

3. Classification

Building

4. Ownership

City of Detroit - Community and Economic Development Department

5. Representation on Existing Surveys

None

6. Description

Bohn Aluminum is a complex of industrial buildings with one office building. The Bohn Aluminum office building is somewhat architecturally distinctive. It presents Neo-classical elements from a functionalist plan. The building displays pilasters and gabled parapets which define the three sections on each of the two visible sides. Much brick ornamentation is evident. The building has painted brick walls and is rectangular in plan. Attached to the office building is the main industrial building which is of steel-framed reinforced concrete construction. Adjacent to this are two more steel-framed, reinforced concrete industrial buildings, one of which has a saw-toothed roof. All of the buildings are two stories high.

7. Significance

Bohn Aluminum is historically significant for its involvement in Detroit's labor movement. Bohn Aluminum and its subsidiary, Michigan Smelting, were organized at the height of the sitdown fever by a series of occupations and work stoppages that spanned a three week period. Twelve-hundred workers in four plants throughout the city participated.

While Black workers in general tended to take a cautious attitude toward the emerging industrial unions, Black workers in Bohn were intimately involved. Bohn had one of the highest concentrations of Black workers in the city and they were not as isolated within the plant as in other factories. Both of these conditions contributed to their higher levels of involvement. Bohn became the first UAW local to elect a Black president although this was met with considerable resistance by some elements of the local.